

# Heart of darkness explicatory essay

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



The heart of darkness novella is a significant work of literature by Joseph Conrad. It is based on the author's journey to Africa, up River Congo. When the captain of the steamboat they are travelling in dies, Conrad takes over as the new captain. This novella appeared in the Blackwood magazine as a 3 part series in 1899 and was published in 1902.

Heart of darkness is a foundational text on the subject of colonialism. This novella is considered a good tool that deals with both physical and psychological transformation that involves the Europeans and also the expedition for individual self knowledge in Africa. Africa is highly shown as a dark continent especially its regions of the Congo basin.

The story stars Charles Marlow an English man who takes a job as a ferry boat captain with a Belgium trading company in Africa. It relates the passage of time to the darkening of the sky during the fictitious narrative. Marlow transports ivory downstream. Throughout his entire voyage he is exposed to the brutality of the European attitudes and the rules of colonialism.

He meets Kurtz, a very cruel man who takes ivory from the Africans by force. He undertakes to return Kurtz to civilization in an attempt to cover up for him, but Kurtz, who was ill at the time, dies on the ship. Before his death Kurtz entrusts Marlow with some documents among them the picture of his fiancée (Lawall).

The heart of darkness clearly gives a clear exploration about issues of imperialism in many different ways. The writer creates a satire where the Europeans are seen as very greedy and ignorant people. The novella exposes the myth behind colonization and brings out three levels of

darkness that Marlow encounters; darkness of the Congo basin, darkness of Europeans cruel treatment of the natives and Darkness within every human being for the sins they commit.

Marlow comes across several bad scenes through his expedition, scenes that showed cruelty, torture and slavery. Marlow is forced to align himself with the hypocritical and malevolent colonial rule and the openly malicious rule (Lawall).

Marlow gives an insight about several actions believed to be done by the Romans and gives an assessment of those actions with the actions of the people doing exploration on the African. The colonial activities are given a harsh image by the author of the novella. It shows the cruelty of the colonialists. It also depicts the white men as being superior to the black man, Kurtz who is a sick man and physically very weak but rules the Africans with a lot of suppression and instead of trading with them he just takes their ivory by force.

Trade is the name given by the men who worked for the company to give a description of what they did and the impunity they imposed on Africans. In this novella Africans are depicted as objects and are abused throughout the story. Kurtz describes his treatment as that of suppression and extermination and acknowledges that he rules by violence and extermination. The harsh treatment can be seen through the references the black people were given.

Lawall, Sarah. *The Norton Anthology of Western Literature*. New York: W. W. Norton publishers, 2005